

# **A Guide to (Some) Top Issues and Management Proposals**

in the  
Vernal Draft Resource Management Plan  
Environmental Impact Statement



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BLM





**The Bureau of Land Management’s multiple-use management mission is complex. Consequently, our resource management plans that serve as the foundation for all decisions on the public lands are complex as well.** The Draft Vernal Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statement complete with appendices and supplemental reports are more than 1,000 pages long. These documents, written in a format to meet RMP guidelines, can be a “tough read” for those unaccustomed to working with large planning documents. For that reason, we have prepared the ***Guide to (Some) Top Issues and Management***

***Proposals*** which highlights a number of the key issues and proposed actions addressed in the RMP. Topics found in the Guide include oil and gas leasing, OHV and recreation use, livestock and grazing management, special status species management, Wilderness Study Areas, and the consideration of wild and scenic rivers and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.

While I’m confident you will find the Guide helpful in several ways, please do not consider it a substitute for the RMP. This Guide will help orient or summarize, but the RMP itself is really the only place to get the detailed information necessary for a more complete understanding of the issues, management proposals or environmental consequences of the alternatives under consideration. The RMP document is easily accessed online (<http://www.vernalrmp.com>) or by contacting the Vernal Field Office. Comments on the RMP are welcomed through April 14, 2005.

It would be difficult to overstate the significance of this land use planning process. Planning on the scale of the Vernal RMP is certainly a challenge, but it is also a unique opportunity to set a course to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the public lands over the next 15 to 20 years.

Thank you for your interest and assistance in helping to shape the best possible blueprint for future management of BLM lands in northeastern Utah.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sally Wisely". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sally Wisely  
State Director  
Utah Bureau of Land Management

Additional maps, photographs, background information as well as quick links to key sections in the RMP are found in the on-line version of the Guide at <http://www.ut.blm.gov/vernalrmpguide>.

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# Planning Overview

Every effort has been made to ensure consistency between the draft RMP and the information contained in the Guide. The draft RMP is the most complete and accurate source of information, should any discrepancies be found between these documents.

All comments related to the resource management planning process should refer to the Vernal draft RMP and EIS, not the Guide.

## Introduction

The Vernal Field Office (VFO) of the Utah Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is revising and integrating the Book Cliffs and Diamond Mountain Resource Management Plans (RMPs) into a new single RMP. The revised RMP will provide planning guidance for public land and federal mineral estate managed by the VFO in Daggett, Duchesne, and Uintah Counties in northeastern Utah, as well as a small portion of Grand County. The consolidated Diamond Mountain and Book Cliffs areas will be referred to as the Vernal Planning Area (VPA).

## Why Are We Doing This Plan?

The purpose of this planning project is to develop a new single RMP that will guide management of BLM-administered lands in the VPA. In addition to updating management on federal lands, the new plan will enhance coordination with other land management agencies including: the State of Utah; the Ute Indian Tribe; the National Park Service (NPS); the Forest Service (USFS); the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA); Daggett, Duchesne, and Uintah Counties; municipalities; and private entities. The Vernal RMP will also provide direction on the management of federal subsurface mineral estates in cooperation with private landowners, the Ute Tribe, or other nonfederal surface owners.

This RMP revision process is needed because of the dated nature of existing plans. Significant changes have occurred since completion of the Diamond Mountain and Book Cliff RMPs. Population growth and increased need for resource development has occurred, while concern for the environment continues. In addition to traditional consumptive uses (e.g., mining and livestock grazing), there is now an increased interest in uses that emphasize aesthetic values such as open space and increased recreational opportunities. These often-conflicting uses need to be addressed in terms of how they affect local communities, regional and state interests, and ecosystem health. Additionally, several changes regarding land management direction have occurred since the Book Cliffs RMP was written. These changes include the transfer of ownership of 47,978 acres of public land (owned by the Department of Energy) to the Northern Ute Tribe; and the need to analyze leasing of 188,500 acres of federal mineral estate within the Hill Creek Extension of the Uintah and Ouray Indian Reservation. These changes need to be addressed as part of this RMP revision and integration process.

### Getting the Acronyms Straight

**BLM** = Bureau of Land Management

**VFO** = The BLM's Vernal Field Office

**VPA** = The Vernal Planning Area (federal, state and private lands) within the scope of this plan. Plan decisions only apply to BLM administered lands.

**RMP** = The Resource Management Plan document currently in draft.

## What Lands Are We Planning For?

The geographic setting of the VPA includes the south slope of the Uintah Mountains, the Uintah Basin, and the Book Cliffs region (see Land Ownership Map). This region of northeastern Utah encompasses approximately 5.5 million acres of federal, state and private lands. Within the VPA, the BLM manages 1,697,000 million acres of surface lands and another 1,914,000 acres of subsurface mineral estate. The proposed decisions in the RMP only apply to these BLM lands and subsurface mineral estate lands. BLM lands comprise approximately 30% of the surface land base in the VPA.

<b>Land Ownership in the Vernal Planning Area (VPA) and the Surrounding Area</b>	
<b>Federal</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Vernal Field Office (VFO)	1,697,039
BLM Moab Field Office (MFO)	28,473
Forest Service (USFS)	1,248,651
National Park Service (NPS)	50,113
Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)	10,898
Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)	3,046
Indian Trust Lands Ute Tribe and Allottees (Bureau of Indian Affairs [BIA] oversight)	846,669
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,913,362</b>
<b>State of Utah</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR)	32,210
School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA)	377,969
Total	410,179
<b>Private</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Total	1,223,791
<b>Total Acreage in Vernal Planning Area (VPA)</b>	<b>5,547,332</b>

Resources within the VPA include mineral resources, wildlife, fisheries, botanical (including listed and non-listed sensitive species), rangeland, wild horses, wilderness, cultural resources, water resources, wetlands and riparian resources, visual resources, and recreational resources. Land use and economic resources include oil and gas, phosphate, tar sands, Gilsonite, livestock grazing, woodland products, building stone, and rights-of-way. Opportunities for hunting, sightseeing, hiking, viewing historic sites, camping, fishing, and off-highway vehicle (OHV) use provide public enjoyment, as well as additional revenues to businesses in and adjacent to the VPA.

Unique features within the planning area include the White and Green Rivers; Browns Park, which provides crucial deer winter range and a high density of cultural and historical sites; the Pariette Wetlands, which provide habitat for over 100 species of wildlife; Red Mountain, with its mountain vistas and plentiful recreational opportunities; Nine-Mile Canyon, with its

Fremont rock art; and the Book Cliffs, an area rich with resources with unlimited management opportunities.

## Planning Process

Resource management determines resource allocations and establish an appropriate combination of uses of public lands. Regulations on planning are described the Code of Federal Regulations (43 CFR 1600). More specific planning guidance is found in BLM Handbook H-1601-1, Land Use Planning Handbook.

**Key Steps in the Planning Process:** There are nine steps in the planning process. The first step in the process, often referred to as “scoping,” is to identify the issues, concerns and opportunities raised by the public and agencies. These issues and opportunities form the basis for the formulation of management alternatives, which are analyzed in the RMP. We are at step 7 in the planning process for the Vernal RMP.

- |        |   |
|--------|---|
| Step 1 | Identification of Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities   |
| Step 2 | Development of Planning Criteria  |
| Step 3 | Inventory Data and Information Collection   |
| Step 4 | Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS)  |
| Step 5 | Formulation of Alternatives   |
| Step 6 | Estimation of Effects of Alternatives   |
| Step 7 | Selection of Preferred Management Plan (this step includes Draft and Final Resource Management Plan [RMP]/Environmental Impact Statement [EIS]) |
| Step 8 | Selection of Resource Management Plan (RMP)   |
| Step 9 | Monitoring and Evaluation   |

## Planning Issues

The planning process is issue-driven in that it responds to resource management conflicts and opportunities raised during the “scoping” step of the planning process. Scoping for this project was conducted from March 12, 2001 through December 31, 2001. During this time period, federal, state and local agencies; other stakeholders; and the general public identified a wide range of issues and opportunities that fall within the following program areas managed by the VFO:

Air Quality	Cultural and Paleontology
Rangeland Management and Health	Watershed Management and Soils
Wildlife Habitat and Fisheries	Wild Horse Management
Fire Management	Woodland and Forest Management
Visual Resource Management	Lands and Realty
Recreation Resources Management	Off-Highway Vehicle Use
Special Management Designations (including ACECs and Wild and Scenic Rivers)	

## **General Description of Alternatives**

This RMP presents four alternative proposals for managing public lands in the planning area. To the extent possible, these alternatives were crafted using input from public scoping comments, county representatives, and other cooperating agencies.

The BLM recognizes that social, economic, and environmental issues cross land ownership lines and that extensive cooperation is needed to actively address issues of mutual concern. To foster a collaborative approach, seven different entities signed agreements to become formal cooperating agencies in this planning process. Formal cooperators include: the Ute Tribe, the State of Utah, Uintah, Duchesne and Daggett Counties, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A cooperating agency is defined as any agency that has jurisdiction by law or special expertise.

Planning regulations dictate that a “no action” must be one of the alternatives analyzed in the RMP. This alternative, which describes the current management situation, serves as a baseline for comparing the other alternatives in the RMP. Planning regulations also require agencies to identify a preferred alternative at the time the draft plan is released for public comment. It should be noted however, that the preferred alternative (Alternative A) is not a final agency decision; rather it is an indication of the preliminary preference at the draft stage in the environmental review process. This preference may be changed based on agency and public comments that are received on the Draft EIS. It is also worth noting that the final plan may “mix and match” any combination of prescriptions or actions analyzed in any of the alternatives.

The following is a general description of the four alternatives analyzed in the RMP:

### **Description of Alternative D (No Action)**

This alternative would maintain present uses by continuing present management direction as stipulated in the Diamond Mountain and Book Cliffs RMPs.

### **Description of Alternative A (Preferred Alternative)**

Management direction is generally broad and accommodates a wide variety of values and uses. The planning area would be managed to provide a sustainable flow of resources for human use, while protecting important watersheds and providing viable populations of native and desirable non-native plants species, and to provide wildlife habitat and opportunities for recreation use.

### **Description of Alternative B (Development Focused)**

This alternative provides for most resource uses but would emphasize oil and gas development, where feasible. Renewable resources would be protected by balancing the development of mineral resources with focused and prudent mitigation measures.

### **Description of Alternative C (Conservation Focused)**

The natural succession of ecosystems would be allowed to proceed in select management areas. This alternative would strongly emphasize maintenance of watershed conditions, species viability, properly functioning ecosystems, and a reduction of habitat fragmentation.



## Issues and Proposed Actions Addressed in this Guide

While the RMP provides a comprehensive analysis of the full spectrum of issues and proposed management actions, the scope of this Guide is limited. The Guide provides a brief discussion of key issues and management options on topics of interest to a majority of parties participating in the planning process for the Vernal RMP. Those topics include: oil and gas development, off-highway vehicle management, non-motorized recreation, livestock and grazing management, management of sensitive species, and special designations such as recommendations for wild and scenic rivers and establishment of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs). This Guide will also briefly touch on Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) and other wilderness related issues.

In doing so, the Guide will address a number of the important questions examined through the RMP process:

- What lands will be open to oil and gas leasing, and under what conditions?
- What lands will be designated “open” (to cross-country travel); “limited” (open to continued travel on designated routes) or “closed” to OHV use?
- Where should “special recreation management areas” be located to emphasize recreation opportunities?
- What adjustments to “seasons of use” which specify time periods when livestock are allowed to graze should be considered?
- What type of development guidelines should be used to reduce or avoid impacts on special status species?
- Which of the 11 “eligible” river segments should be recommended as “suitable” for inclusion into the national Wild and Scenic River system?
- What new Areas of Critical Environmental Concern should be established?

### **Where to find detailed information in the RMP:**

Plan Executive Summary (S-1 to S-5)

Planning Process for a complete explanation of the planning process including the issues identified during the scoping process, planning criteria and other important topics. (Pages 1-3 to 1-13)

# Programs

Every effort has been made to ensure consistency between the draft RMP and the information contained in the Guide. The draft RMP is the most complete and accurate source of information, should any discrepancies be found between these documents.

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## Oil and Gas

While the VPA contains a number of important mineral resources, the exploration and development of oil and gas is the major development activity taking place on public lands in the Uintah Basin today. At present, approximately 2,800 oil and gas wells are located on BLM-administered lands in the planning area. This equates to about half of all active wells in Duchesne, Uintah, and Daggett Counties. In 2003, 7.4 million barrels of oil and twenty-four billion cubic feet of natural gas were produced in the tri-County region.

Demand for natural gas is expected to drive intense oil and gas exploration and development activity on BLM-managed lands over the 15 to 20 year planning period of the proposed RMP. The VPA is located in the western portion of the Uintah/Piceance Basin which is known to have significant oil and natural gas reserves. A multi-agency study in 2003 estimated oil and gas reserves for the entire basin at between 61-296 million barrels of oil and 12-35 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Most of the undiscovered natural gas is found widely dispersed in continuous deposits rather than distinct structural traps. Overall, approximately 72% of all BLM lands in the Uintah Basin are currently leased, with the highest concentrations of leased land found in the southern and eastern portion of the VPA. (See Current Oil and Gas Leases, Existing Oil and Gas Wells Maps).

The Geologic and Engineering Team in the BLM Vernal Office projects increases in exploration and development in the six producing areas in the VPA. Forty-five (45) to 75 seismic surveys are anticipated over the life of the plan. BLM also projects that approximately 2,055 new oil wells, 4,345 new gas wells, and 130 new coal bed methane (CBM) wells will be drilled over the next 15 years. The majority of the oil and gas development activity is expected in the Monument Butte-Red Wash area and most coalbed natural gas activity in the East and West Tavaputs Plateau areas.

<b>Potential for Occurrence and Future Oil and Gas Activity</b>			
<b>Development Area</b>	<b>Predicted Gas Wells</b>	<b>Predicted Oil Wells</b>	<b>Predicted Coal-bed Methane Wells</b>
Manila-Clay Basin	45	0	0
Tabiona-Ashley Valley	0	30	0
Altamont-Bluebell	250	175	0
Monument Butte - Red Wash	3100	1700	0
West Tavaputs	350	75	50
East Tavaputs	600	75	80
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4,345</b>	<b>2,055</b>	<b>130</b>

## Key RMP Decisions – Oil and Gas Leasing

The exploration and development of oil and gas is accomplished in several stages. Each stage from allocations, to leasing, to exploration and development has their own set of procedures, reviews, and authorizations. The foundation, however, is the allocation step which occurs in RMPs to determine which lands will be made available and under what conditions.

**Leasing Categories:** The BLM allocates land into one of four different leasing categories that describe the availability and/or conditions placed upon public lands in regard to their availability for fluid hydrocarbon leasing. The entire VPA has been assigned one of the following leasing categories:

Standard Stipulations – Areas open to exploration and development, subject to the terms and conditions of the standard lease form which states in part, “lessee shall conduct operations in a manner that minimizes adverse impacts to the land, air, and water, to cultural, biological, visual, and other resources, and to other land uses and users.”

Timing and Controlled Surface Use – Areas open to exploration and development, subject to relatively minor constraints such as seasonal restrictions. These areas possess other land uses and/or resource values such as critical big game wildlife range or special status plant and wildlife species. The stipulations are utilized where there are resource values which may require specific protection, but the conflicts with oil and gas exploration and development would not be of sufficient magnitude so as to preclude surface occupancy.

No Surface Occupancy – Areas open to exploration and development subject to highly restrictive lease stipulations, including no surface occupancy (NSO). This means that no surface development, such as roads or drill pads, could exist on the lease. Resource extraction would have to occur via drainage or directional drilling from another location.

Closed to Leasing – These areas have other land uses or resource values, which cannot be adequately protected, even with the most restrictive lease stipulations. Closing these areas to leasing is the only way to ensure their appropriate protection. Often these areas are closed due to law, rule, regulation or policy.

## Proposed Actions by Alternative in the RMP — Oil and Gas

### Actions Common to All:

- Approximately 53,111 acres within the Ouray National Wildlife Refuge would be closed to oil and gas leasing.
- All WSAs would be closed to leasing by law.
- Mitigation of oil and gas impacts developed under the plan and applied to leases in the form of stipulations would adhere to BLM’s standard format. Stipulations generally reflect the minimum requirements necessary to protect the resource and would contain provisions/criteria to allow for waiver and modification if warranted.

- The plan would provide for a variety of mineral and geophysical exploration. These activities would be allowed in the planning area unless precluded by other program prescriptions. The stipulations identified for oil and gas operation in Appendix L would generally apply to these activities.

**Actions Specific to Alternative D (No Action)**

1,672,960 million acres of the BLM-administered lands in the VPA would be available for lease in one of three different “open” categories. Of the lands available, 48 percent would be available under standard stipulations, 32 percent under timing and controlled use, and 7 percent under no surface occupancy restrictions. Seasonal restrictions (timing and controlled use category) would apply to areas of critical deer and elk winter range in the Book Cliffs, east of the lower Green River and large areas in the northeastern corner of the VPA. Seasonal and spatial raptor buffers, under the auspices of best management practices, would be applied in all areas. No surface occupancy restrictions would be placed along the Pariette Draw on sections of the White and Green Rivers and other discrete locations. Under this alternative, 241,041 acres (13 percent) of BLM- administered lands would be closed to leasing. (Note: this number includes the 188,500 acres of split estate lands underneath the Hill Creek Extension which were unavailable for leasing when earlier resource management plans were completed. A total of 52,540 acres of BLM-administered lands are currently closed to leasing.)

A total of 5,856 new oil and gas wells are predicted.

**Actions Specific to Alternative A (“Preferred”)**

1,850,162 acres of the BLM-administered lands in the VPA would be available for lease in one of three different “open” categories. Of the lands available, 52 percent would be available under standard stipulations, 41 percent under timing and controlled use, and 4 percent under no surface occupancy restrictions. Seasonal restrictions (timing and controlled use category) would apply to areas of critical deer and elk winter range in the Book Cliffs and other areas. Seasonal and spatial raptor buffers, under the auspices of best management practices, would be applied in all areas. No surface occupancy restrictions would be placed on the Pariette Draw, sections of the Green and White Rivers and other discrete locations. Under this alternative, 63,839 acres (3 percent) of BLM- administered lands would be closed to leasing. In addition to all WSAs, portions of the White River, Lower Flaming Gorge and an area abutting the southeast corner of Dinosaur National Monument would be closed.

A total of 6,342 new oil and gas wells are predicted.

**Actions Specific to Alternative B (Development Focused)**

1,861,450 acres of the BLM-administered lands in the VPA would be available for lease in one of three different “open” categories. Of the lands available, 58 percent would be available under standard stipulations, 37 percent under timing and controlled use, and 2 percent under no surface occupancy restrictions. Seasonal restrictions (timing and controlled use category) would apply to areas of critical deer and elk winter range in the Book Cliffs and other areas. Seasonal and spatial raptor buffers, under the auspices of best management practices, would be applied in all areas. No surface occupancy restrictions would be placed on the Pariette Draw, sections of the White River, along the Green River at Brown’s Park and

other discrete locations. Under this alternative, 52,550 acres (3 percent) of BLM administered lands would be closed to leasing. In addition to all WSAs, an area abutting the southeast corner of Dinosaur National Monument would be closed.

A total of 6,391 new oil and gas wells are predicted.

**Actions Specific to Alternative C (Conservation Focused)**

1,685,755 acres of the BLM-administered lands in the VPA would be available for lease in one of three different “open” categories. Of the lands available, 45 percent would be available under standard stipulations, 40 percent under timing and controlled use, and 3 percent under no surface occupancy restrictions. Seasonal restrictions (timing and controlled use category) would apply to areas of critical deer and elk winter range in the Book Cliffs and large areas in the northeastern corner of the VPA. Seasonal and spatial raptor buffers, under the auspices of best management practices, would be applied in all areas. No surface occupancy restrictions would be placed on a ½ mile buffer surrounding Dinosaur National Monument and on a area that abuts the west side of the monument. The Pariette Draw, sections of the White River and Green Rivers and other discrete locations would also be closed. Under this alternative, 228,246 acres (12 percent) of BLM-administered lands would be closed to leasing. In addition to all WSAs, sections of the Green and White Rivers, Lower Flaming Gorge, the Uintah foothills and portions of the East Tavaputs Plateau would be closed.

A total of 6,225 new oil and gas wells are predicted. (While many areas are proposed closed under this alternative, the majority of the affected lands are currently under lease and subject to valid existing rights. Due to increased development interest driven by the high price of energy resources, it is anticipated that development will occur in many areas prior to the expiration of existing leases.)

(See Oil and Gas Lease Alternative Maps.)

**Where to Find Detailed Information in the RMP:**

Chapter 2: Table 2.3 Alternatives, Chart of management actions of each alternative (page 2-49 to 2-50)

Chapter 2: Table 2.5 Summary of Impacts, Chart of impacts by alternative (page 2-87 to 2-89)

Chapter 3: 3.8 Minerals and Energy Resources, Description of affected environment (page 3-39 to 3-45)

Chapter 4: 4.8 Minerals and Energy Resources, Detailed discussion of environmental consequences of mineral and energy exploration and development with regard to management actions proposed in each alternative (page 4-97 to 4-125)

Maps: Oil and Gas Leases, Mineral and Energy Resources and Reasonable Foreseeable Development (Figure 11 to 19)

## Off-Highway Vehicles

Like many places in the West, OHV use has increased dramatically in the VPA. Use occurs on existing trails and in more concentrated areas where less structured, cross-country travel occurs. Areas that receive the most OHV use within the planning region are day-use area sites popular with Uintah Basin residents. Some of the areas of highest OHV use are:

- Buckskin Hills, north of the town of Vernal.
- Jensen Hills
- Raven Ridge area, which is south of the east Highway 40 and east of the old Bonanza Highway;
- Glen Bench ATV area north of Fantasy Canyon (an unofficial designated site, where people are directed to go to minimize intensive use of other more sensitive areas).

## Key RMP Decisions – OHV Area Allocations and Route Designation

To manage OHV use, BLM allocates lands within one of three different OHV use categories; open, closed or limited. During this planning process, lands would be designated as either open to cross-country travel, limited to designated routes, or closed to off-highway vehicle use. A second important decision related to OHV management that will be made in the RMP involves the identification of the specific roads and trails that will be either open or closed on lands within the “limited to designated routes” category. This route designation process, undertaken during the RMP process, will establish a system of OHV trails that can be mapped, signed and monitored. Further refinement of this OHV trail system will occur, as need arises, in subsequent activity-level planning.

## Proposed Actions by Alternative in the RMP – OHV Management

### Actions Common to All Alternatives

- In collaboration with interested parties, the BLM will make future route adjustments (subsequent to the RMP planning process) based on access needs, recreational opportunities, and natural resource constraints. These adjustments would occur only in areas with open and/or limited route designation and would be analyzed at the activity planning level.
- Motorized vehicles would be allowed to travel on a single path up to 300 feet from designated routes to access a camp.

### Actions Specific to Alternative D

887,859 acres of BLM administered lands in the VPA would be open to existing or designated roads and trails. 787,859 acres would be open to cross-country travel. 50,388 acres would be closed to OHV use, including the Sand Wash put-in and other areas in the vicinity of Desolation Canyon, a half-mile wide corridor along the White River and other areas in the northeast portion of the VPA. WSAs, such as the Winter Ridge WSA, would remain open on existing inventoried ways.

### **Actions Specific to Alternative A**

1.64 million acres of BLM-administered lands in the VPA would be placed in the open to designated roads and trails category that would include a trail system of approximately 4,860 miles of open routes. 75,845 acres would be closed to OHV use including all WSAs and other areas such as the Lower Flaming Gorge, a portion of the White River area, the Sand Wash “put-in” area, and Lear’s Canyon. 6,202 acres would be available as open “play” areas where cross-country travel would continue. The areas commonly known as Honda Hills, Jensen Hills, Twelve-Mile Flat, and Devil’s Playground would be managed as OHV recreation sites. The Glen Bench, Raven’s Ridge and Buckskin Hills areas would “transition” to areas where use would continue, but on designated routes. Improvements would occur on 800 miles of existing motorized trails.

### **Actions Specific to Alternative B**

1.65 million acres of BLM-administered lands in the VPA would be placed in the open to designated roads and trails category that would include a trail system of approximately 4,860 miles open routes. 60,187 acres would be closed to OHV use including all WSAs, a smaller portion of the White River and the Sand Wash put-in. 5,434 acres would be available as open “play” areas where cross-country travel would continue. The same areas identified under Alternative A would be managed as OHV open areas, but the Devil’s Playground Area would be smaller. Improvements would occur on 800 miles of existing motorized trails.

### **Actions Specific to Alternative C**

1.35 million acres of BLM-administered lands in the VPA would be placed in the open to designated roads and trails category that would include a trail system of approximately 4,707 miles of open routes. 366,559 acres would be closed to OHV use to include all WSAs, the lands identified in Alternative A, and many other areas such as Wolf Point, Hell’s Hole Canyon, Sweet Water Canyon, Cripple Cowboy, Rat Hole Ridge, Bitter Creek, Bull Canyon, Moonshine Draw Bourdett Draw, Diamond Mountain and lands in the vicinity of Desolation Canyon. Many of these lands coincide with areas where wilderness characteristics have been found or are thought likely to exist. 5,434 acres would be available as open “play” areas where cross-country travel would continue. The same areas identified under Alternative B would be managed as OHV recreation sites.

(See Travel/OHV Area Alternative Maps.)

#### **Where to Find Detailed Information in the RMP:**

Chapter 2: Table 2.3 Alternatives, Chart of management actions of each alternative (page 2-62)  
Chapter 2: Table 2.5 Summary of Impacts, Chart of impacts by alternative (page 2-89)  
Chapter 3: 3.10 Recreation, Description of affected environment (page 3-49 to 3-54)  
Chapter 4: 4.10 Recreation, Detailed discussion of environmental consequences OHV and non-motorized recreation (page 4-141 to 4-161)  
Maps: Travel/OHV Areas (Figure 25 to 28)



## Non-Motorized Recreation

The vast and varied landforms within the Vernal Field Office accommodate many recreational uses. With two major rivers and several small mountain ranges, this area attracts recreational users from the Uintah Basin, as well as from western Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, and Utah's heavily populated Wasatch Front. Recreation's rise in popularity has presented challenges to managing outdoor recreation to accommodate demand, while ensuring the health of the resources that are essential to its existence.

Non-motorized trails for hiking, equestrian use and bicycling are an important component of the recreation mix in the planning area. Some of the most popular trails are Dry Fork Flume, a non-motorized trail approximately 19 miles long and the Vernal Canals constituting 47 miles of non-motorized trails near the town of Vernal.

Four popular scenic drives are located in the planning area (Nine Mile, Jones Hole, and Browns Park Backways and the Flaming Gorge Drive through the Ages National Scenic Byway).

BLM and the Ashley National Forest jointly manage river recreation along three major segments; the Flaming Gorge Dam to Little Hole (Section A), Little Hole to Indian Crossing (Section B), and Indian Crossing to the Utah/Colorado state line (Section C). The White River is also an important resource for commercial and non-commercial boating. The most popular section of the White River is from the Bonanza Bridge to the Enron take-out, a distance of 32 river miles.

### ERMAs and SRMAs – BLM's Basic Units of Recreation Management

BLM Outdoor Recreation Planners classify public lands into one of two different categories-- Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMAs) and Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs). Extensive Recreation Management Areas are where recreation is unstructured and dispersed, minimal recreation-related investments are required, and minimal regulatory constraints are required. In most situations, the vast landscapes outside the boundaries of Special Recreation Management Areas are classified by BLM as ERMAs.

Special Recreation Management Areas are locations where recreation is emphasized. Typically, SRMAs are locations where combinations of facilities and/or recreational experiences are found. The Brown's Park SRMA for example, includes public lands surrounding a 23-mile stretch of the Green River where boating, fishing, hiking, camping and enjoyment of the historic site are popular activities. BLM maintains developed camping sites, the historic Jarvie Ranch, trails, and provides interpretation and other types of recreational services focused in the area.

Four SRMAs currently exist in the VPA:

Browns Park SRMA  
Nine Mile SRMA

Red-Mountain-Dry Fork SRMA  
Pelican Lake SRMA

### **Backcountry Byways and Other Types of Recreation Improvements**

Backcountry Byways are vehicle routes that traverse scenic corridors utilizing secondary or back country road systems. The BLM works closely with the state of Utah to provide interpretation and other services to promote enjoyment of these scenic byways.

Improvements to existing trails and the development of new trails, recreation facilities and other types of improvements are addressed in this RMP.

## **Key RMP Decision – The Consideration of SRMAs, Backcountry Byways and Other Improvements**

SRMAs: Decisions as to whether or not to carry forward existing SRMAs, or establish new ones, are made through the RMP process. Three new SRMAs are considered in different alternatives.

- White River SRMA (24,183 acres) Boating and other recreational opportunities along the river corridor.
- Blue Mountain SRMA (42,758 acres) A variety of recreational opportunities including hang gliding, equestrian use, camping, hiking and rock climbing.
- Book Cliffs SRMA (273,486 acres) Dispersed “primitive” recreational activities are found in this area.

Backcountry Byways and Other Recreation Improvements: Plan alternatives consider the designation of the Seep Ridge, Book Cliffs Divide, and the Atchee Ridge Roads as BLM Backcountry Byways; improvements on 800 miles of existing motorized trails; improvements on existing non-motorized trails and development of new hiking, horseback and bicycle trails (400 total miles of trail); construction of new recreation cabins, and many other recreation-related actions to ensure the continued availability of quality outdoor recreation opportunities and experiences; protect the health and safety of visitors; protect natural, cultural, and other resources; and enhance recreational opportunities.

## **Proposed Actions by Alternative in the RMP – Non-Motorized Recreation**

### **Actions Common to All Alternatives**

All existing special recreation management areas would be carried forward and current implementation programs would continue.

### **Actions Specific to Alternative D**

Four existing SRMAs would be maintained at present size, but no new SRMAs would be established. No new BLM Backcountry Byways.

### **Actions Specific to Alternative A**

Two existing SRMAs would be maintained at present size and the Brown’s Park (52,720) and Nine Mile (81,168) SRMAs would be expanded. New SRMAs would be established at Blue Mountain, White River and the Book Cliffs. The Seep Ridge, Book Cliffs Divide and Atchee Ridge Roads would be added to the BLM’s Backcountry Byway system. Improvements would occur on 400 miles of non-motorized trails.

**Actions Specific to Alternative B**

The four existing SRMAs (Brown's Park, 18,474; Nine Mile Canyon, 44,181; Pelican Lake, 1,020 and Red Mountain-Dry Fork, 24,285) would be maintained at present size. No new SRMAs would be designated. The Seep Ridge, Book Cliffs Divide and Atchee Ridge Roads would be added to the BLM's Backcountry Byway system. Improvements would occur on 400 miles of non-motorized trails.

**Actions Specific to Alternative C**

Two existing SRMAs would be maintained at present size; the Brown's Park (52,720) and Nine Mile (81,168) SRMAs would be expanded. New SRMAs would be established at Blue Mountain (42,758), White River (24,183) and Book Cliffs. No new oil and gas leasing would be permitted in Wolf Point, Bitter Creek and at the head of Sweetwater Canyons. No BLM Backcountry Byways would be designated. Improvements would occur on 400 miles of non-motorized trails.

(See Special Recreation Management Areas Map.)

**Where to Find Detailed Information in the RMP:**

Chapter 2: Table 2.3 Alternatives, Chart of management actions of each alternative (page 2-51 to 2-53)

Chapter 2: Table 2.5 Summary of Impacts, Chart of impacts by alternative (page 2-89 to 2-92)

Chapter 3: 3.10 Recreation, Description of affected environment (page 3-49 to 3-54)

Chapter 4: 4.10 Recreation, Detailed discussion of environmental consequences OHV and non-motorized recreation (page 4-141 to 4-161)

Maps: Special Recreation Management Areas (Figure 21 to 24)



## Livestock and Grazing Management

The Vernal Field Office currently administers 160 allotments within the VPA encompassing 1,691,116 acres of BLM land and 545,887 acres of other lands (private, state, tribal, etc.) intermingled within the boundaries of these allotments.

Livestock are regularly permitted to graze on 153 of the 160 allotments as follows: cattle (113), sheep (27), sheep and cattle (12), and horses (1). A few of the cattle and/or sheep allotments also permit some horses. Forty-five of the 153 allotments are currently grazed under a deferment rotation system, which involves delaying grazing in an allotment until the seed maturity of the key forage species.

Grazing preference is retired on the following allotments: Red Creek Flat, Rye Grass, Marshall Draw, Taylor Flat, Warren Draw South, Watson-Diamond Mountain and Sears Canyon. Future use of these allotments is discretionary and would only be approved on a non-renewable basis following an adequate evaluation and assessment to determine if the livestock grazing use would enhance wildlife values.

Within the VPA, 146,220 animal unit months (AUMs) are allocated for livestock, but active permitted use for the 160 allotments is currently 137,897 AUMs. However, the demand for forage resources by livestock (the total average actual use) for the past 10 years was only 78,500 AUMs. Suspended use for the 160 allotments is currently 26,364 AUMs. Comprehensive grazing allotment information is summarized in Appendix N.

**Current Grazing Management Categories:** In 1997, the BLM in Utah developed Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Management (see Appendix I). These standards are descriptions of the desired condition of the biological and physical components and characteristics of rangelands. Guidelines are management approaches, methods, and practices that are intended to achieve a standard.

Using these standards and guidelines, Vernal BLM has since re-evaluated each grazing allotment and designated each as being in one of three management categories: Maintain (M), Improve (I), or Custodial (C). The criteria used for categorizing the allotments were based on resource potential, resource use conflicts or controversy, opportunity for positive economic return on public investments, and the present management situation. Sixty allotments are in the I category, 47 are in the M category, and 53 are in the C category.

## Key RMP Decisions -- Seasons of Use

Management of “season of use”—the time during which livestock grazing is permitted on a given range area—is one of the most important tools used to maintain or achieve rangeland health. Rangeland Management Specialists regulate the timing of grazing to ensure the vigor of forage species both rangelands and livestock operations depend upon. Different alternatives in the draft RMP propose adjustments to season of use.

## **Proposed Actions by Alternative in the RMP --- Livestock and Grazing Management**

### **Actions Common to All Alternatives**

Season of Use: In the future, prior to approving changes in permitted seasons of use, the following would be mandatory:

- Compliance with the standards for range management (see Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Management for BLM Lands in Utah, May 1997);
- Preparation, signature, and implementation of a monitoring plan;
- Signature of permittee accepting the grazing management practices determined necessary by the Authorized Officer to approve the change; and
- Agreement by permittee to management practices that provide for the physiological requirements of desired plants.

Requests from a permittee to change seasons of use would be a priority if all of the following criteria were met:

- Changes enhance or meet resource objectives contained in the Vernal RMP;
- Allotment/s are scheduled for assessment the same year a request is made; and
- Funding for the assessment is provided by sources other than BLM.

BLM would develop management plans and/or grazing agreements for livestock allotments to allow flexibility in grazing management, which may include consolidation of allotments, change in seasons of use, and reduction and/or consolidation of grazing allotments and pastures.

Livestock permittees with allotments within wild horse Herd Management Areas would be required to have a current health certificate including documentation of annual vaccinations for infectious diseases for all horses, mules, or burros used in their grazing operation.

### **Alternative D – No Action**

Under this alternative, seasons of use would be based on the current permitted use. Grazing on many allotments would continue during critical growth periods (April/May) of forage species.

### **Actions Specific to Alternative A**

Under this alternative, seasons of use would be determined based on plant phenology to ensure that the physiological requirements of plants would be met. Deferments and other tools would be used to facilitate an adaptive management approach. The following adjustments are proposed:

### **Actions Specific to Alternative B**

The determination of season of use under Alternative B would be based on an average of billed use. The billed use is based on how the permittees are actually billed. Grazing on many allotments would continue during critical growth periods (April/May) of forage species without a deferment.

### **Actions Specific to Alternative C**

The determination of season of use under Alternative C would be based on how grazing was adjudicated in the 1960s. It is similar to Alternative A, but lacks the discretion to allow adaptive management approaches to react to change.

#### **Where to Find Detailed Information in the RMP:**

Chapter 2: Table 2.3 Alternatives, Chart of management actions of each alternative (page 2-48 to 2-49)

Chapter 2: Table 2.5 Summary of Impacts, Chart of impacts by alternative (page 2-85 to 2-86)

Chapter 3: 3.7 Livestock and Grazing Management, Description of affected environment (page 3-35 to 3-37)

Chapter 4: 4.7 Grazing and Livestock Management, Detailed discussion of environmental consequences (page 4-83 to 4-96)

Maps: Seasons of Use (Figure 7 to 10)

Appendix F: Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Management, (F-3 to F-6)





## Special Status Species

Special status species include those plant and animal species federally listed as threatened, endangered, proposed and/or candidate, as well as BLM and State of Utah sensitive plant and animal species.

There are 15 listed and one (1) candidate for a federally-listed species within the VPA. All of these species are both known to occur and have additional potential habitat in the VPA. Of these 16 species, there are 5 wildlife, 4 fish, and 7 plant species.

In addition, both the BLM and the State of Utah maintain lists of sensitive plant and animal species. The restricted distributions, specialized habitat requirements, and population pressures (human induced and natural) facing special status species contribute to a high potential for federal listing, thus, their populations are of conservation interest. There are 28 other special status species in the VPA that are listed in Table 3.15.2 in Chapter 3 of the RMP. BLM and state sensitive species include 13 wildlife, 4 fish, and 12 plant species.

## Key RMP Decisions – Development Guidelines and Criteria Used to Reduce or Avoid Impacts to Special Status Species

Law, regulation and policy provide protection to special status species. For example, the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (Public Law 93 - 205, as amended), provides protection to federally-listed threatened, endangered and candidate species from actions that may jeopardize their existence.

Further, it is BLM policy that BLM-listed sensitive species are to be managed as if they were candidate species for federal listing so that they do not become listed, while also fulfilling other federal law mandates. The BLM has a policy of entering into conservation agreements and other conservation measures to protect both State- and BLM-listed species. BLM Manual 6840 specifies that BLM will manage State-listed plants and animals “to the extent that they are consistent with other Federal laws.”

Numerous conservation strategies and agreements, most enacted in partnership with federal or state wildlife agencies, promote further protections to species at risk.

Due to the significance of this issue, the VFO has also specified species-specific protocols to establish criteria and procedures that oil and gas and other types of development activities would be subject to. These “best management practices” cover a wide range of development activities and plant and animal special status species. Spatial and seasonal buffers for raptors, conservation strategies to protect sage grouse habitat, and the implementation of the Conservation Agreement and Strategy for Colorado River cutthroat trout are of particular interest. Different alternatives in the RMP implement these protocols to varying degrees. Appendix A in the RMP, *The Vernal Field Office Best Management Practices for Raptors and Associated Habitats*, provides a detailed listing of procedures.

## Proposed Actions by Alternative in the RMP – Special Status Species

### Actions Common to All

- In collaboration with USFWS, and DWR in the case of animal species, the BLM will develop conservation plans and strategies for sensitive species.
- Continue to work with partners to implement the specific goals and objectives of all Recovery Plans, Conservation Plans and Strategies, and activity level plans.
- Complete inventories and map current occupied and potential habitats for all listed and non-listed special status plant species.

### Species-specific actions that are common to all alternatives include:

- Unitah Basin hookless cactus: Work cooperatively with the USFWS on a recovery plan that is currently in draft.
- Bald Eagle: Protect and restore cottonwood bottoms for bald eagle winter habitat along the Green and White Rivers, at Pelican Lake, and at the Cliff Creek Bald Eagle roost site, as well as any new roost sites discovered in the future.
- Peregrine Falcon: Protect and enhance riparian habitat in Pariette Draw, along the Green River, White River, Bitter Creek, and other drainages.
- Ferruginous Hawk: In cooperation with UDWR, maintain and enhance white-tailed prairie dog and other foraging habitat to provide primary food sources for the ferruginous hawk.
- Yellow-billed Cuckoo: Restore and conserve riparian areas and develop specific riparian vegetation objectives that would benefit bird species dependent on riparian areas
- Black-footed Ferret: BLM would manage the black-footed ferret consistent with the 1999 Black-footed Ferret Reintroduction Plan Amendment and those portions of the Cooperative Plan for the Reintroduction and Management of Black-footed Ferret in Coyote Basin, Uintah County, Utah that are consistent with this plan amendment.
- Bonytail, Colorado Pikeminnow, Humpback Chub, Colorado River Cutthroat Trout, and Razorback Sucker: Implement recovery plan actions for bonytail, Colorado pikeminnow, humpback chub, and razorback sucker.
- Colorado River Cutthroat Trout: Implement Conservation Agreement and Strategy for Colorado River cutthroat trout in the States of Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming signed April 2001, or more recent revisions of this agreement.

### Actions Specific to Alternative D (No Action)

Raptors: Where there are new oil and gas leases, no construction or surface disturbing activities would be allowed which would adversely affect current use or limit or preclude potential future use of the an unoccupied golden eagle nest, unless a permit to take is obtained from the USFWS. No construction or surface disturbing activities would be allowed year 'round on known, unoccupied peregrine falcon, ferruginous hawk and bald eagle nests. The above restrictions for golden eagle, peregrine falcon, ferruginous hawk, and bald eagle nests would not apply to maintenance and operation of existing facilities. On existing oil and gas leases, bald eagle, golden eagle, peregrine falcon, ferruginous hawk and burrowing owl nests would be protected for two years, during which time permanent disturbances would not

occur within the spatial buffer; non-permanent activities would be allowed within the spatial buffer, but outside the seasonal buffer.

Spatial and seasonal buffers listed in the Diamond Mountain RMP would continue to be applied to twenty special status or sensitive raptor species. On occupied nests in the Diamond Mountain portion of the VPA, surface-disturbing activities would not be allowed within the specified distances of an active golden eagle, bald eagle, peregrine falcon, or ferruginous hawk nest year 'round. Surface disturbing activities within the specified distances of an active nest site would not be allowed within the specified active reproductive periods for the following raptor species: burrowing owl, osprey, Swainson's hawk, northern goshawk, short-eared owl, prairie falcon, merlin, American kestrel, turkey vulture, Cooper's hawk, sharp-shinned hawk, northern harrier, red-tailed hawk, great horned owl, long-eared owl, and Mexican spotted owl.

Sage Grouse: In the Book Cliffs portion of the VPA, surface disturbance related to mineral activities--exploration, drilling, and other development-- would be allowed only during the period from June 15 to March 15, and no drilling or storage facilities would be allowed within 300 feet of the sage grouse leks.

In the Diamond Mountain portion of the VPA, surface-disturbing activities would not be allowed within sage grouse nesting areas (a two-mile radius of sage grouse strutting grounds within the sagebrush vegetation type) from March 1 through June 30 (identified as 88,500 acres in management priority area III). Surface-disturbing activities would not be allowed within 1,000 feet of sage grouse leks.

#### **Actions Specific to Alternative A**

Raptors: Raptors would be managed under "Best Management Practices" (BMPs) (see Appendix A), including implementation of spatial and seasonal buffers comparable to the USFWS's Guidelines for Raptor Protection From Human and Land Use Disturbances, with modifications allowed as long as protection of nest is ensured. See appendix H in the RMP for a description of seasonal and spatial buffers.

Unoccupied nests would be protected from all activities including new oil and gas leases for a period of seven years under criteria specified for long and short-term development activities. Where there are existing leases; Bald eagle, golden eagle, peregrine falcon, ferruginous hawk, and burrowing owl nests would be protected for two years in accordance with specified criteria.

Where nests are occupied, long-term land use activities that would have adverse impact would not be allowed within the spatial buffer of occupied nests. Short-term land use activities would be allowed outside the breeding /nesting period within the spatial buffer of nests. Any modifications to spatial and season buffers would be made in accordance with the criteria spelled out in the VFO's BMPs

Sage Grouse: The Strategic Management Plan for Sage Grouse, State of Utah June 11, 2002, would be adopted and implemented as the baseline threshold. Human disturbances would be avoided within 0.6 mile of a lek during the breeding season (March 1 to May 31) from one

hour before sunrise to three hours after sunrise, and construction of roads, fences, poles, and utility lines would be avoided within 1,300 feet of a lek. Within 0.5 mile of known active leks, the best available technology would be used to reduce noise, such as installation of multi-cylinder pumps, hospital sound-reducing mufflers, and placement of exhaust systems.

### **Actions Specific to Alternative B**

Raptors: Raptors would be managed at a level less restrictive than the USFWS guidelines, except for threatened and endangered raptor species and ferruginous hawks which would be managed as described in Alt. A. Seasonal buffers would generally be less restrictive. Unoccupied nests of T&E species and ferruginous hawks would be protected from all activities, including new and existing oil and gas leases, for a period of three years, yet allow for facilities and structures to be constructed outside of the temporary spatial and seasonal buffers. However, new or additional surface occupancy would not be allowed within one-quarter mile of nests. For all other raptor nests, a temporary buffer zone would be provided within one-quarter mile between February 15 and August 1st.

On occupied nests of T&E raptor species and ferruginous hawks, new or additional surface occupancy would not be authorized within one-half mile of nests between February 15 through August 1st. Additionally, there would be NSO within one-quarter mile of occupied nests. For all other raptor species, new or additional surface occupancy would not be authorized within ¼ mile of nests between Feb. 15th and Aug. 1st.

Once T&E species and ferruginous hawks have occupied a nest, the temporary buffers could be waived on an alternate unoccupied nest within the territory after verification by a qualified biologist and approval by the authorized officer. For all other raptor species, protection could be waived once young are in the nest, depending on proximity and type of disturbance. If no nesting activity is initiated during the breeding season, the buffers could be waived by the authorized officer.

Sage Grouse: Significant human disturbances would be avoided within 0.6 mile of a lek during the breeding season (March 1-May 31) from one hour before sunrise to three hours after sunrise. Construction of roads, fences, poles, and utility lines would be avoided within 1,300 feet of a lek. Any developments within the 1,300 feet would be designed to minimize, to the extent possible, bird structure. Any development within two miles of a lek would be designed to minimize, to the extent possible, raptor perching. Special measures to reduce noise would not be required.

### **Actions Specific to Alternative C**

Raptors: USFWS's spatial and seasonal buffers would be implemented for raptors as recommended in Table 2 of the Utah Field Office Guidelines for Raptor Protection From Human and Land Use Disturbances.

Where there are new oil and gas leases, unoccupied nests would be protected from all long-term use activities for seven years. Short-term land use and human activities could progress near a nest or nest territory after sufficient time has elapsed in a specific breeding season to determine a nest is unoccupied and prior to the beginning of the next year's breeding season.

On existing oil and gas leases, bald eagle, golden eagle, peregrine falcon, ferruginous hawk and burrowing owl nests would be protected for two years, during which time permanent disturbances would not occur within the spatial buffer; non-permanent activities would be allowed within the spatial buffer, but outside the seasonal buffers.

Where there are occupied nests, no activities would be authorized within the spatial/seasonal buffer of any nest. Short-term land use and human use activities would only proceed within the spatial buffer of an occupied nest outside the seasonal buffer after coordination with appropriate agency biologists. Long-term land use activities and human use activities would not occur within the species-specific spatial buffer of nests.

Modifications to the spatial and seasonal buffers would be made in accordance with the criteria in the VFO's best management practices

Sage Grouse: Connelly's Guidelines to Manage Sage Grouse Populations and Their Habitats, which recommends no surface disturbing activities within two miles of active sage grouse leks from March 1 to June 15 and no surface disturbing activities within one-quarter mile of active sage grouse leks year round, would be implemented. No permanent facilities or structures would be allowed within two miles when possible. Within 0.5 mile of known active leks, the best available technology would be used to reduce noise, such as installation of multi- cylinder pumps, hospital sound-reducing mufflers, and placement of exhaust systems.

**Where to Find Detailed Information in the RMP:**

Chapter 2: Table 2.3 Alternatives, Chart of management actions of each alternative (page 2-60 to 2-61)

Chapter 2: Table 2.5 Summary of Impacts, Chart of impacts by alternative (page 2-99 to 2-100)

Chapter 3: 3.15 Special Status Species, Description of affected environment (page 3-89 to 3-104)

Chapter 4: 4.15 Special Status Species, Detailed discussion of environmental consequences. (page 4-231 to 4-268)

Appendix A: Vernal Field Office Best Management Practices for Raptors and Associated Habitats (A-3 to A-12)

Appendix K: Surface Stipulations Applicable to all Surface Disturbing Activities (K-3 to K-24)



## Wild and Scenic Rivers

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act established legislation for a National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (NWSRS) to protect and preserve designated rivers throughout the nation in their free-flowing condition, as well as their immediate environments. It contains policy for managing designated rivers, and created processes for designating additional rivers into the National system. Section 5(d) of the Act directs federal agencies to consider the potential for national wild, scenic, and recreational river areas in all planning, for the use and development of water and related land resources. A “Wild and Scenic River” review is being conducted as part of the Vernal RMP revision.

**Three Step Review Process:** The first phase of Wild and Scenic River (WSR) review is to inventory all potentially eligible rivers within the planning area and to determine which of those rivers are eligible for designation into the NWSRS.

Next, all eligible rivers are taken through the land use planning process to determine their suitability for designation into the national system. A full range of alternatives for wild and scenic river suitability determinations has brought forward in the RMP.

Suitability determinations are reported to Congress. There is no specific time requirement for completion of this phase; however, it is assumed that reporting will be done some time following completion of the land use plan. Only the Congress or the Secretary of Interior, upon an official request by a state, can designate a river into the national system.

**Identification of Eligible Rivers:** To determine eligibility, the Vernal Field Office (VFO) conducted an inventory of all potentially eligible rivers. This included all rivers nominated during the scoping process or that appeared on National River lists. Rivers on the National Rivers List were automatically identified and considered as potentially eligible. In addition, all rivers within the planning area were mapped and reviewed by agency and non-agency subject matter specialists and members of the interested public to identify any additional rivers that could be potentially eligible. All rivers determined to be eligible were considered further for suitability in the planning process.

**Eligibility Criteria:** To be eligible, a river must be free flowing. The WSR Act defines “free-flowing” as any river or section of river, existing or flowing in natural condition without impoundment, diversion, straightening, rip-rapping, or other minor structures at the time any river is proposed for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System (NWSRS). The existence of low dams, diversion works, and other minor structures will not automatically bar its consideration from such inclusion, provided that it will not be construed to authorize, intend, or encourage future construction of such structures within components of the NWSRS. The intent of the U.S. Congress and federal regulations is that rivers must be generally free flowing, but not completely without human modification.

Another screening criterion to determine if a river segment may be eligible for inclusion in the WSR System is that the river must possess one or more “outstandingly remarkable” scenic, recreational, geological, fish, wildlife, historical, cultural, or other similar values including ecological value(s).

The size of a river is NOT a criterion of eligibility. To be eligible, rivers do not have to be outstanding white-water or boatable. Flow must simply be sufficient to sustain the outstandingly remarkable value that makes a river or river segment eligible for consideration.

**Classification of River Segments:** A “tentative classification” of wild, scenic or recreational is determined for any eligible river. Tentative classifications are based on the evidence of man’s activities and the condition of the river and the adjacent lands at the time of the inventory.

- A “wild” river is “free of impoundments,” with shorelines or watersheds essentially primitive, and unpolluted waters.
- A “scenic” river may have some development, and may be accessible in places by roads or railroads.
- A “recreational” river is considered as a river or section of river accessible by road or railroad, may have more extensive development along its shoreline, and may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past.

**River Segments Determined Eligible for Wild and Scenic River Designation:** Of the 89 streams segments identified and inventoried by the VFO as potentially eligible, 11 segments involving approximately 112 BLM shoreline miles and 216 total river miles were determined to be eligible for Congressional designation into the NWSRS. Appendix C, Wild and Scenic River Eligibility, Suitability, Classification and Review in the RMP provides additional information regarding the eligibility review. It is BLM policy (8351 Manual, Section .32C) to manage eligible segments to protect their free-flowing nature, outstandingly remarkable values, and tentative classifications to the extent that BLM has the authority to do so. Until the ROD for the Vernal RMP is signed, such protection involves case-by-case review and mitigation of any actions proposed that might affect the eligible river. Protective management will continue for any segments determined suitable in the ROD for the Vernal RMP. For each suitable river, the ROD will identify specific management conditions that are in keeping with a suitability decision.

The following river segments were determined to be eligible:

Argyle Creek	Recreational	22.0 miles
Bitter Creek	Scenic	22.0 miles
Evacuation Creek	Recreational	21.0 miles
Lower Green River	Scenic	30.0 miles
Middle Green River	Recreational	36.0 miles
Nine Mile Creek (A)	Recreational	13.0 miles
Nine Mile Creek (B)	Scenic	6.0 miles
Upper Green River	Scenic	22.0 miles
White River (A)	Scenic	24.0 miles
White River (B)	Wild	10.0 miles
White River ©	Scenic	10.0 miles



**Wild and Scenic River Suitability:** Rivers determined to be eligible for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System are further evaluated to determine their suitability for inclusion into the national system.

The RMP evaluates impacts that would result if the eligible rivers were determined suitable and managed to protect their free-flowing nature, tentative classification, and outstandingly remarkable values. It also addresses impacts that would result if the eligible rivers are not determined suitable, and those values are not protected.

In addition to the impact analysis addressed by alternative, the following suitability considerations are applied to each eligible river:

- Characteristics which do or do not make the area a worthy addition to the NWSRS
- Status of land ownership and use in the area
- The reasonably foreseeable potential uses of the land and waters that would be enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed if the area were included in the NWSRS; and the values which could be foreclosed or diminished if the area is not protected as part of the NWSRS
- Interest by federal, tribal, state, local, and other public entities in designation or non-designation of a river, including the extent to which the administration of the river, including the costs thereof, can be shared by the above mentioned entities
- Ability of the agency to manage and protect the values of a river area if it were designated, and other mechanisms to protect identified values other than designation into the NWSRS
- The estimated cost, if necessary, of acquiring lands, interests in lands, and administering the area if it were included in the NWSRS
- The extent to which administration costs would be shared by local and state government

## **Key RMP Decision – Wild and Scenic River Suitability Recommendations**

The primary decision to be made in the RMP is to determine which eligible river segments would be determined suitable for consideration by Congress for inclusion into the Wild and Scenic Rivers System as wild, scenic or recreational rivers.

## **Proposed Actions by Alternative in the RMP – Wild and Scenic River Recommendations**

### **Common to All**

- Under all of the alternatives, BLM would continue to manage previously recommended suitable segments of the Upper Green (22 miles) and Lower Green Rivers (30 miles) to protect their outstandingly remarkable values and the tentative classifications until such time that a designation decision is made.
- New river segments found suitable and recommended for designation would be managed in accordance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to prevent impairment

of remarkable values within line of sight up to one-quarter mile from center-line on each side of the river. The final plan will identify specific management conditions that are in keeping with a suitability decision.

#### **Alternative D**

Alternative D would simply carry forward management of the Upper and Lower Green as described above. All other identified river segments would remain eligible.

#### **Actions Specific to Alternative A**

20 miles of the White River (described below) would be identified as suitable for designation into the National Wild and Scenic River system

- “Scenic” between the state line and its confluence with Asphalt Wash (10 miles).
- “Wild” between Asphalt Wash to where the river leaves Section 19 T10S R23E (10 miles).

#### **Alternative B**

No new river segments would be identified as suitable.

#### **Alternative C**

Portions of the White River, Nine Mile Creek, Middle Green River, Evacuation Creek, Bitter Creek, and Argyle Creek, encompassing a total of 164 miles would be identified as suitable.

- White River (44 miles)
  - “Scenic” between the stateline and its confluence with Asphalt Wash (24 miles)
  - “Wild” between Asphalt Wash and where the river leaves section 18 (10 miles)
  - “Scenic” from Section 18 to the Indian trust land boundary (10 miles)
- Nine Mile Creek (19 miles)
  - “Scenic” between the Green River and Duchesne County line (13 miles)
  - “Recreational” between the Carbon County line and confluence with Gate Canyon (6 miles)
- Middle Green River “recreational” (36 miles)
- Evacuation Creek “recreational” (21 miles)
- Bitter Creek “scenic” (22 miles)
- Argyle Creek “recreational” (22 miles)

(See Special Designations Alternative Maps.)

#### **Where to Find Detailed Information in the RMP:**

Chapter 2: Table 2.3 Alternatives, Chart of management actions of each alternative (page 2-54 to 2-58)

Chapter 2: Table 2.5 Summary of Impacts, Chart of impacts by alternative (page 2-98)

Chapter 3: 4.14 Special Designations, Description of affected environment (page 3-84 to 3-85)

Chapter 4: 4.14 Special Designations, Detailed discussion of environmental consequences (page 4-210 to 4-215)

Maps: Special Designations (Figure 22 to 24)

Appendix C: Wild and Scenic River Eligibility, Suitability, Classification, and Review, (C-3 to C-22)

<b>RIVER SEGMENTS THAT WOULD BE DETERMINED SUITABLE AND TOTAL RIVER MILES BY ALTERNATIVE</b>				
<b>River / River Segment</b>	<b>Alternative A (river miles)</b>	<b>Alternative B (river miles)</b>	<b>Alternative C (river miles)</b>	<b>Alternative D (river miles)<sup>1</sup></b>
White River 'Scenic' between the state line and Asphalt Wash	10	0	24	0
White River 'Wild' between Asphalt Wash and Section 18	10	0	10	0
White River 'Scenic' from Section 18 and Indian trust land	0	0	10	0
Nine Mile Creek 'Scenic' between the Green River and the Duchesne Co Line	0	0	13	0
Nine Mile Creek 'Recreational' within Duchesne County, between the Carbon Co line and Gate Cyn	0	0	6	0
Upper Green River	22	22	22	22
Lower Green River	30	30	30	30
Middle Green River	0	0	36	0
Evacuation Creek	0	0	21	0
Bitter Creek	0	0	22	0
Argyle Creek	0	0	22	0
<b>Total River Miles</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Total BLM Shoreline Miles</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>39</b>
<sup>1</sup> In addition, 87 miles of river involving the White River (Segments 1, 2, and 3), Evacuation Creek, and Bitter Creek would remain eligible with this alternative. <sup>2</sup> Alternative A only recommends a portion of Segment One of the White River..				



## Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

An ACEC is a designation that highlights areas where special management attention is needed to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural and scenic values; fish, wildlife resources or other natural systems or processes; or to protect human life and safety from natural hazards. The designation is a record of significant values that must be accommodated when BLM considers future management actions and land use proposals.

ACECs differ from other special designations, such as Wilderness Study Areas, in that designation by itself does not automatically prohibit or restrict other uses in the area. While WSAs are managed to a standard that excludes surface disturbing activities and permanent structures that would diminish the areas' natural character, the management of ACECs is focused on the resource or natural hazard of concern. This varies considerably from area to area, and in some cases may involve surface disturbing actions.

Through the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, Congress mandated that BLM give priority to ACEC designations in land use planning. Private lands and lands administered by other agencies may be located within the boundaries of ACECs, but are not subject to the prescribed management of the ACEC.

The VFO currently manages seven ACECs (187,044 total acres) that were designated in the earlier Diamond Mountain RMP:

### **Browns Park**

Values: Endangered species, cultural and historic, scenic, riparian.

This valley of lush meadows originally created by the Green River during high water levels, has been a natural haven for wildlife and settlers since the Ute and Shoshone Indians came here hundreds of years ago.

### **Lears Canyon**

Values: Relict vegetation.

Lears Canyon contains a natural system, specifically relict plant and plant communities, serves as a scientific reference area.

### **Red Mountain – Dry Fork**

Values: Cultural and paleontological resources and relict vegetation.

This area has significant diversity and density of cultural sites, quality paleontological finds, and two relict vegetation communities.

### **Pariette Wetlands**

Values: Unique biological, riparian, endangered species.

The Pariette Wetlands site is Utah's own desert oasis. Pariette is a unique marsh complex surrounded by many miles of arid desert. It features freshwater ponds, alkali bulrush, diverse emergent vegetation, and wet meadows. Mallard, gadwall, cinnamon teal, pintail and Canada geese are the most common waterfowl species. The site was developed in 1972 to improve waterfowl production and provide seasonal habitat for other species including ring-necked

pheasant, mourning dove, sandhill and whooping cranes, and peregrine falcon. A wide variety of raptors including the bald eagle, harrier, and prairie falcon also use the area.

### **Red Creek Watershed**

Values: Watershed

This area is a regionally significant critical watershed that is part of the Green River drainage system and its Class 1 fishery values.

### **Lower Green River**

Values: Endangered species, scenic.

Flowing east from Flaming Gorge Dam in northeastern Utah toward the Utah/Colorado state line, the scenic Green River provides riparian habitat for special status animal species. Along its shores, cottonwood trees provide habitat for wildlife. The cold, clear water is a “Blue Ribbon” trout fishery and provides for various types of water recreation.

### **Nine Mile Canyon**

Values: Cultural, endangered species.

This area contains nationally significant Fremont, Ute, and Archaic rock art and structures; regionally significant populations of special status plant species, high quality scenery, and the 78-mile Nine Mile Canyon Back Country Byway.

## **Key RMP Decision – Consideration of ACECs**

During the planning process BLM considers both existing and newly proposed ACECs. An interdisciplinary team of BLM specialists reviews new nominations to see if mandatory relevance and importance criteria are met for further consideration during the RMP process. Existing ACECs are also subject to re-consideration.

**New ACECs Under Consideration:** Eight (8) potential ACECs and the expansion of two existing ACECs are being considered for designation through the planning process. Only those nominated areas determined to meet specific relevance and importance are identified as potential ACECs. The following is a brief description of new potential ACECs:

### **Coyote Basin ACEC (47,659 or 87,743)**

The Coyote Basin ACEC provides crucial habitat for the endangered black-footed ferret, and includes one of the largest populations of white-tailed prairie dogs, a species essential to the ferret’s survival. The size of the ACEC varies by alternative.

### **Coyote Basin Complex ACEC (124,161 acres)**

This ACEC would join five sub complexes into a single larger unit designation.

### **Bitter Creek ACEC (71,000)**

This ACEC would protect high-value, old growth pinyon pines, cultural resources, historical features and watersheds. This area includes the state’s largest tree and likely the oldest living pinyon in the United States (measuring 138 inches in diameter and 41 feet high, the tree is well over 1,000 years old.). The size of this ACEC varies by alternative.

**Bitter Creek – PR Springs ACEC (147,425 acres)**

This ACEC would include all the features of the Bitter Creek ACEC in addition to Sweetwater Canyon, Tom Patterson Canyon, P.R. Canyon, and the Book Cliffs Mountain Browse WSA.

**White River ACEC ( 17,810 or 47,130 acres)**

The White River ACEC would be designated to protect unique geologic formations with spectacular vistas and high-value river ecosystems. The river corridor is attracting increasing numbers of visitors from many states and countries for canoeing, rafting, fishing, hiking, camping, picnicking, and sightseeing. The size of this ACEC varies by alternative.

**Middle Green River ACEC (6,768 acres)**

6,768 acres (line of sight from the centerline of the river up to one-half mile along both sides of the Middle Green River) between Dinosaur National Monument and the boundary of the Ouray National Wildlife Refuge would be designated as an ACEC to protect riparian ecosystems.

**Four Mile Wash ACEC (50,280 acres)**

50,280 acres in the Four Mile Wash area would be designated as an ACEC/Outstanding Natural Area to protect high-value scenic values, riparian ecosystems, and special status fish species.

**Main Canyon ACEC (100,915 acres)**

100,915 acres in Main Canyon would be designated as an ACEC. Special management attention would include permitting surface disturbing activities found to be complimentary or compatible to the goals and objectives of the ACEC.

## **Proposed Actions by Alternative in the RMP – ACECs**

**Actions Common to All Alternatives**

With the exception of Alt. B which would eliminate the Lower Green River ACEC in its entirety, all alternatives carry forward the seven existing ACECs. While the size of some individual ACECs would vary by alternative, all continue to be managed as designated ACECs, and their relevance and importance values, including historic, cultural, scenic, fish and wildlife resources, would continue to be protected, subject to valid existing rights.

**Alternative D**

The existing seven ACECs would be carried forward.

**Actions Specific to Alternative A**

An additional three ACECs (White River, Bitter Creek, and Coyote Basin), encompassing 176,553 acres would be established. The Coyote Basin ACEC that is proposed (87,743 acres) includes the primary management zone based on the current re-introduction area of the black-footed ferret and several thousand additional acres to the north and west suggested by Utah Division of Wildlife Resources as reintroduction areas for the ferret. The existing Nine Mile Canyon and Lower Green River ACECs would be expanded by a combined total of approximately 5,500 acres.

### Alternative B

The Coyote Basin ACEC, designating the “primary management zone” for the black-footed ferret, (47,659 acres) would be established. The size of existing Brown’s Park ACEC would be reduced to 18,475 acres. The 10,170 Lower Green River ACEC would be eliminated.

### Alternative C

Six new ACECs (Bitter Creek, White River, Middle Green River, Coyote Basin, Four Mile Wash, and Main Canyon) would be established encompassing a total of approximately 476,679 acres. The larger Coyote Basin Complex ACEC (124,161 acre) would be designated.

The following table summarizes the ACECs that would be designated under each alternative:

Proposed ACECs				
Alternative	A	B	C	D
ACEC Designations				
	Acreage	Acreage	Acreage	Acreage
Browns Park*	52,721	18,475	52,721	52,721
Lears Canyon*	1,375	1,375	1,375	1,375
Red Mountain-Dry Fork*	24,285	24,285	24,285	24,285
Pariette Wetlands*	10,437	10,437	10,437	10,437
Red Creek Watershed*	24,475	24,475	24,475	24,475
Lower Green River*	10,170	0	10,170	8,470
Nine Mile Canyon*	48,000	44,181	81,168	44,181
Bitter Creek	71,000	0	147,425	0
White River	17,810	0	47,130	0
Middle Green River	0	0	6,768	0
Coyote Basin	87,743	47,659	124,161	0
Four Mile Wash	0	0	50,280	0
Main Canyon	0	0	100,915	0
<b>Total ACEC Acreage</b>	<b>313,770</b>	<b>205,133</b>	<b>681,310</b>	<b>165,944</b>

\* Existing ACECs

#### Where to Find Detailed Information in the RMP:

Chapter 3: 3.14 Special Designations, Description of affected environment (page 3-79 to 3-84)  
 Chapter 4: 4.14 Special Designations, Detailed discussion of environmental consequences (page 4-203 to 4-210)  
 Maps: Special Designations (Figure 22 to 24)  
 Appendix G: ACEC Evaluations for the Vernal Resource Management Plan (G-3 to G-8)



## Wilderness Study Areas

In 1964, Congress passed the Wilderness Act, establishing a national system of lands for the purpose of preserving a representative sample of ecosystems in their natural condition for benefit of future generations. The Forest Service, National Park Service, and Fish and Wildlife Service managed most of the land designated as wilderness prior to 1976. With the passage of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) in 1976, Congress directed the BLM to inventory, study, and recommend which public lands under its administration should be designated as wilderness.

In 1979, the BLM began a wilderness inventory of 22 million acres of public land in Utah. By 1985, the BLM established 95 wilderness study areas (WSAs), totaling about 3.3 million acres, which have wilderness character. For the next several years, these areas were studied to determine which would be recommended to Congress for designation as wilderness. In October 1991, the Secretary of the Interior recommended that Congress designate 69 areas, totaling about 2 million acres as wilderness. To date, with few exceptions, Congress has not acted on that recommendation.

There is no designated wilderness on public lands in the VPA.

**WSAs in the VPA:** There are six WSAs in the VPA (Figure 23). The WSAs, designated and protected under the authority of Section 603 of FLPMA, are managed according to the *Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands under Wilderness Review* (IMP, BLM Manual Handbook H-8550-1), to preserve their wilderness values until Congress either designates them as wilderness or releases them for other uses.

WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS	
Name	Acreage
Book Cliffs Mountain Browse ISA	400 acres
Bull Canyon	520 acres
Daniels Canyon	2,496 acres
Diamond Breaks	3,900 acres
West Cold Springs	3,200 acres
Winter Ridge	42,462 acres
<b>Total Areas: 6</b>	<b>52,978 acres</b>

## Key RMP Decisions – Determining OHV Categories and VRM Classes

Only Congress can designate a WSA as wilderness or release it from the protective mandate of FLPMA. Therefore, the status of WSAs will not change as a result of this resource management planning process. In the interim, WSAs will continue to be managed under the Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands under Wilderness Review (IMP).

While most prescriptions and use allocations are set under the IMP and are not subject to decisions in the resource management planning process, BLM does determine OHV use categories (e.g. open, limited, or closed) and Visual Resource Management classification in the RMP. Under the IMP, OHV use can continue on inventoried ways as long as this use does not impair wilderness values. BLM policy directs all WSAs to be managed under VRM Class I guidelines designed to preserve the existing character of the landscape.

The RMP also specifies allocations and prescription that would apply should any lands in WSAs be released by Congress. Table 2.3 Alternatives in Chapter 2 of the RMP (pages 2-58 to 2-59) lists the management prescriptions that would apply should any lands be released by Congress.

## **Proposed Actions by Alternative in the RMP – WSAs**

### **Alternatives A, B, C, and D**

- Manage the following WSAs: Daniels Canyon (2,496 acres), Winter Ridge (42,462 acres), West Cold Spring (3,200 acres), Diamond Breaks (3,900 acres), Bull Canyon (326 acres), and the Book Cliffs Mountain Browse Natural Area (400 acres) according to BLM's Interim Management Policy (IMP) For Lands Under Wilderness Review (H-8550-1) in a manner that does not impair their suitability for designation as wilderness.
- All WSAs would be closed to OHVs, except Alternative D (no action).
- All WSAs would be managed under VRM Class 1 objectives.

**Non-WSA Lands With or Likely to Have Wilderness Characteristics:** Since WSAs were established in the 1980s, Utah wilderness allocations and decisions have become a national issue. For more than 20 years, the public has debated which lands have wilderness characteristics and should be considered by Congress for wilderness designation. Because of the debate (and a significant passage of time since the BLM's original inventories), in 1996 the Secretary of the Interior directed the BLM to take another look at some of the lands in question. In response to the Secretary's direction, the BLM inventoried these lands and found approximately another 2.6 million acres of public land statewide—in addition to existing WSAs—to have wilderness characteristics (Utah Wilderness Inventory 1999).

In April 2003, the U.S. District Court, District of Utah, Central District approved a memorandum of agreement, negotiated to settle a lawsuit originally brought in 1996 by the State of Utah, Utah SITLA, and the Utah Association of Counties, challenging the BLM's authority to conduct new wilderness inventories. The settlement stipulated that the BLM's authority to designate new WSAs expired no later than October 21, 1993. The BLM, however, does have the authority to conduct inventories for characteristics associated with the concept of wilderness and to consider management of these values in its land-use planning process. IM 2003-275-Change 1 identifies wilderness characteristics that may be considered in land use planning as naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation.

There are nine areas in the VPA (approximately 110,492 acres), outside of existing WSAs, that were determined by BLM in the 1999 inventory to have the wilderness characteristics of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation.

During scoping for this land use plan, the public proposed that another 16 areas have wilderness characteristics and should be managed to preserve those values. A BLM interdisciplinary team evaluated this and other information and determined that all or portions of 11 areas, totaling approximately 164,904 acres, are likely to have wilderness characteristics including naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation.

As mentioned above, BLM does not have the legal authority to consider the establishment of new WSAs in this planning process. Nor are non-WSA lands under the protective mandate of the IMP. BLM can however, inventory lands for primitive recreation and other values, consider these values on equal footing with all other resources, and prescribe management to sustain or enhance such values. For example, BLM may propose to emphasize primitive, unconfined recreation experiences that depend upon maintaining lands in a natural condition. To achieve these management objectives, management prescriptions may be tailored to restrict OHV use, apply no surface occupancy, or close lands to oil and gas leasing. Lands may also be classified in VRM categories designed to minimize changes to the visual environment.

Various alternatives in the RMP propose use allocations and prescriptions to achieve desired management objectives in this manner. In Alternative A, limitations on OHV use, oil and gas leasing and more restrictive visual resource classifications are proposed in portions of the White River area, Lower Flaming Gorge and other areas. Alternative C proposes 228,246 acres to be closed to oil and gas leasing and 366,559 acres closed to OHV use to meet the conservation goals which are the theme of this alternative. Some of the areas where primitive forms of recreation or similar type management objectives are proposed coincide with non-WSAs lands with or likely to have wilderness characteristics.

#### **Where to Find Detailed Information in the RMP:**

Chapter 2: Table 2.3 Alternatives, Chart of management actions of each alternative, if released by Congress (page 2-59)

Chapter 2: Table 2.5 Summary of Impacts, Chart of impacts by alternative (page 2-98)

Chapter 3: 3.14 Special Designations, Description of affected environment (page 3-35 to 3-37)

Chapter 4: 4.14 Special Designations, Detailed discussion of environmental consequences (page 4-83 to 4-96)

Maps: Special Designations and Non-WSA Lands With or Likely to Have Wilderness Characteristics (Figure 22 to 24 and Figure 20)

# Summary

Every effort has been made to ensure consistency between the draft RMP and the information contained in the Guide. The draft RMP is the most complete and accurate source of information, should any discrepancies be found between these documents.

All comments related to the resource management planning process should refer to the Vernal draft RMP and EIS, not the Guide.